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# ON THE ETYMOLOGY OF NEKASIM.

BY PROFESSOR PAUL HAUPT, PH. D.,  
Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Md.

In four post-exilic passages of the Old Testament we find a word נְכָסִים in the meaning of "riches, wealth," Greek *chrēmata*, *ὑπάρχοντα* or *ὑπαρξίς*. Josh. XXII. 8, it occurs along with מְקִנָּה כֶּסֶף זָהָב נְחֹשֶׁת בְּרִזְלִי שִׁלְמוֹת; Eccles. v. 18, we find עֵשֶׂר נְכָסִים וְכָבוֹד; *ibid.* VI. 2, עֵשֶׂר וְנְכָסִים; <sup>1</sup> so too 2 Chr. I. 11, 12, עֵשֶׂר נְכָסִים וְכָבוֹד.

In the Aramean portions of the Book of Ezra we find for it the form נִכְסִין, constr. מִנְכְּסֵי מֶלֶכָא דִּי-מִדְתַּ עֵבֶר נַהֲרָה, viz. Ezra VI. 8, *out of the moneys of the king from the tribute of the district Abar-Nahara*, i. e., *west of the Euphrates*; and Ezra VII. 26, עֲנֵשׁ נִכְסִין, *confiscation of goods* or *a fine*, Greek *ζημιῶσαι τὰ ὑπάρχοντα*.

Usually the stem נִכְס is regarded as a metathesis from כָּנַס *to gather together, to heap up*. This explanation is, for example, retained in the latest edition of Gesenius' Lexicon. Friedrich Delitzsch, on the other hand, thinks (p. 181, n. 1 of his *Prolegomena*) that the word is probably connected with Assyrian *nikâsu*, which, according to its etymology (?), as well as its ideogram (?), means something assigned to some one either as a possession or as a deposit.

To this I should like to remark, in the first place, that the long â, in Delitzsch's transcription *nikâsu*, does not seem to me to be certain. As far as I know, the

<sup>1</sup> LXX.: *πλοῦτος καὶ ὑπάρχοντα καὶ δόξα*; פְּשִׁיטָתָא: עֹתָרָא וְנִכְסָא וְאִיקָרָא: R. Isaak ben Yehuda Ibn Ghiyath (غياث i. e., אִבְנֵי יְהוּדָא אֲבֵן גִּיַּיַּת, in his Arabic translation of the Book of Koheleth (edited by Jacob Loevy, Leiden, Brill, 1884) has for that יְסָרָהּ וּמָאֵלָא וְכִרְאָמָהּ, i. e., *يسارة ومالا وكرامة*.

<sup>2</sup> That מְקִנָּה "tax, tribute," as well as the corresponding Aramean מְדַתָּא go back to the Assyrian *mandattu* or *mandantu* "tribute," from Assy. מְנַן "to give" (= Heb. נָתַן, SFG. 43, 2), I have already remarked SFG. 16, 4. Why this explanation is attributed to Friedrich Delitzsch in the latest edition of Gesenius' Lexicon (p. 437) I am at a loss to tell. Pognon likewise in his "Inscription de Mèrou-Nérar I.," p. 42, n. 1, remarks: Le mot *mandattu*, *mandatta*, qui vient du thème NDN, a passé en syriaque, où il est devenu مَنَدَتُّو, pl. مَنَدَتُّو, without citing my SFG. The combination of מְנַן, on the other hand, in the connection מְנַן וְהִלָּךְ (occurring three times in the Book of Ezra, viz., Ezr. iv. 13 and 20; vii. 24) with Assy. *biltu* "tax" goes back to Oppert (EM. II., 49, 92, cf. de Goeje-Kautzsch in the *Theologische Literaturztg.*, 1886, No. 22, col. 509 and has never been claimed by myself. Wāteh-ben-Hazael, p. 12, n. 2, (HEBRAICA, Vol. I., No. 4), I cited for it KAT. 377. It might be well to note that the form מְנַן which Kautzsch ("Grammar of the Biblical Aramean," p. 100) would explain as a contraction from מְנַן seems to me very suspicious. For *biltu*, constr. *bilat* (from וָבֵל "to bring," = Heb. הוֹבִיל) we should expect in Aramean בִּלְתָּא, constr. בִּלְתַּ, absol. בִּלְא. Besides in Assyrian the expression usually is *bilat mandatti* "gift of tribute" so that *bilat* is construct state to *mandatti*; at any rate, *biltu* always comes first. Perhaps it would be better to change מְנַן וְהִלָּךְ into מְנַן בִּלְתָּא וְהִלָּךְ; cf. *φόρων πρᾶξιν καὶ συντέλεσμα* of the LXX., Ezr. iv. 13.

word is nowhere written ni-ka-a-su or ni-kas-su. The denoting of the vowel of the second syllable as â rests, I presume, only on the supposition, heretofore generally held, that all qital forms are to be assumed in Assyrian as qitâl.<sup>1</sup> I have repeatedly shown (cf. *HEBRAICA*, vol I., p. 175) that we must read šikaru *strong drink* and zikaru *man*, for instance, with a short *a*. The shortness of the *a* is implied by the occurrence of the syncopated by-forms šikru and zikru.<sup>2</sup> Similarly erroneous is the often repeated assertion<sup>3</sup> that all nominal formations written qatalu, in Assyrian, are to be read qatâlu. Instances of the form qâtâl, with short *a* in the second syllable, in Assyrian, are, for example, išaru *straight, righteous* (= iašaru; cf. my SFG. 21, 1), fem. išartu, Hebr. יִשָּׁר, fem. יִשְׂרָה; ma'adu *much*, fem. ma'attu, cf. Hebr. מְאֹד; ḥatanu *son-in-law* (cf. Schrader, COT. 126; V R. 5, 2; 40, 36 c) = Hebr. חָתָן.<sup>4</sup>

I should, therefore, prefer to read nikâsu, a form like Hebr. לֵבָב heart and עֵנָב grape. That נִכְסִים did not originate by metathesis<sup>5</sup> from כְּנִסִּים, but should rather be combined with Assyr. nikasu, is quite right; yet the original meaning of nikasu is different from that given by Delitzsch. Nikasu comes from the common Assyrian verb nakâsu (Impf. ikkis) *to cut off or to cut down*;

<sup>1</sup> Hommel, in the Assyrian Index to his *Jagdinschriften*, writes, for example, שָׂכַר, זָכָר with a long *a*. The same mistake occurs in the latest edition of Gesenius' Lexicon, s. v. שָׂכַר and No. 139 of the "Schrifttafel" of Delitzsch's "Assyrische Lesestücke," (in the Glossary he gives correctly šikaru).

<sup>2</sup> Also Assyr. צִיל "rib" (with צ<sub>3</sub>), pl. צִילִין, is a qitl form syncopated from qital. צִיל stands for צִל, צִלָּא, צִלָּע. In Arabic we find ضَلَعَ and ضَلَع alongside of another.

<sup>3</sup> Vide e. g. Hommel, *Jagdinschriften*, p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Concerning חָתָן I should like to add that the etymology as proposed by Friedr. Delitzsch ("Prolegomena," p. 91) from Assyr. خَتَان "to protect" seems to me rather unlikely. The same opinion is expressed by Kautzsch in his review of Delitzsch's "Prolegomena" in *Theol. Literaturzeitung*, 1886, No. 2, col. 508. The correct etymology seems to me to have been indicated by Wellhausen in his "Prolegomena," p. 360. According to him the circumcision of boys is historically explained Exod. iv. 25 as a milder equivalent for the primitive circumcision of young men before marriage. In a note he adds: That this was the original custom is shown by the word חָתָן which means both "circumcision" and "bridegroom," or in Arabic [and Assyrian] "son-in-law." This at once explains the meaning of חָתָן דָּמִים "bridegroom of blood, blood-bridegroom," in Exod. iv. 25. Even at the present time the primitive custom prevails among some Arabian tribes, just as Shechem in Gen. xxxiv. was compelled to be circumcised before marriage.

<sup>5</sup> On the other hand the stem נָסַךְ "to offer" (cf. Dan. ii. 45) לָהּ might be due to metathesis from נָכַס. The fact that it is specially used of libations presents no difficulty. In Assyrian, for instance, נָסַךְ means libation and then specially "sacrificial lamb," while נָסַךְ in Aramean means "lamb" in general; cf. *Praetermissa*, 42, 53: נָסַךְ = נָסַךְ na'je, pl. נָסַכִּים = نَعَاج na'âj. The stem נָסַךְ has developed the same meanings as the stem נָסַךְ.

The latter means "to pour out, to bring a libation," then "to offer" in general, and finally "to expiate, to purify, to cleanse." Similarly نَسَكَ nasaka (from which نَسِكة nasike "victim" is derived) in Arabic means "to offer," then "to clean," specially clothes (غسل); finally "to be clean, pure, blameless, pious." But all these meanings go back to the original meaning of נָכַס "to cut off." For the metathesis of נָכַס to נָסַךְ, compare נָשַׁךְ "to bite," which appears in Aramean as נָכַת. In Amharic we have nasâka and nakâsa alongside of one another in the meaning "to bite."

e. g., *kirâtišu*<sup>1</sup> *akkis* *I cut down his parks*, or *qaqqâsu*<sup>2</sup> *akkis* *I cut off his head*.

We have from the same stem a noun *niksu* (constr. *nikis*) which means "slaughter, massacre." From the meaning "to cut down" there is developed the meaning "to kill, to slaughter." This is, as is well known, the usual meaning of the stem נכס in Aramean. The Aramean derivative נִכְסְתָא, which is feminine to Assyrian *niksu*, means then "slaughter,"<sup>3</sup> and then, at the same time (like Heb. טֶבַח in טִבְחָהּ טִבְחָהּ Prov. ix. 2), "what there is to be slaughtered," "pecus ad cultrum destinatum," "cattle to be killed," and then "animal to be immolated victim," or "offering"<sup>4</sup> in general, like Assyrian *nikasu*; just as Hebr. זֶבַח means both "to slaughter" and "to offer."

In the three-columned vocabulary ASKT. 108, 4, this Assyrian *nikasu* corresponds to the ideogram LAG, which, in other passages (ASKT. 22, 439; 71, 10; II R. 38, 11e; V R. 31, 6; Sb. 241) is rendered by *qirbânu* or *qurbânu*, i. e., קִרְבָּן.<sup>5</sup> It is preceded by the words *qîštu* (cf. HEBRAICA, I, 179) *gift*, *taklîmu* *present*, and *nindabû*, i. e., Hebr. נְדָבָה *free-will offering*.<sup>6</sup>

The original meaning of *nikasu* is, accordingly, "victim, hostia, bloody sacrifice," מִן-הַזֶּבַחַהּ, Lev. i. 2. The original meaning of נִכְסִים, on the other hand, is really "pecus ad cultrum destinatum, cattle to be killed," then generally "cattle, herds." And it is from this that the meaning "property, wealth, riches" is developed. In Syriac, נכסא possesses not only the signification "wealth," like Hebr. נִכְסִים, but also the original meaning "herds of cattle;" cf. Lagarde, *Praetermissa*, p. 42, 4; l. 51, where נכסא corresponds to the Arabic الذبح = نكساتا; *ibid.*, l. 55, جماعة الدوابّ والمال والمواشي.

The connection between Lat. *pecunia* and *pecus* is well known. In the same way *sugullatu* in Assyrian means "herd;" the corresponding Hebrew word סִגְלָה, however, "property." On the other hand, the word מִקְנֶה, which properly means "property," from קָנָה *to appropriate, to acquire*, has, in Hebrew, exclusively assumed the meaning of "animal property, cattle;" cf. Greek κτήνος =

<sup>1</sup> That the plural of כֶּרֶךְ (cf. Heb. כֶּרֶךְ "meadow," Isa. xxx. 23; pl. כְּרִים, Ps. xxxvii. 20 and lxxv. 14) should be *kirêtu* does not follow from the text TSBA. viii. 287, cited by Pinches, II ZK. 159, l.

<sup>2</sup> For *qaqqadsu*; cf. Heb. קִרְקֶר, a form like *qaqqaru* "ground," Heb. קִרְקֶר by dissimilation with غ instead of ر.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Acts viii. 32, פִּשְׁתָּא : אִינְ אִמְרָא לְנִכְסְתָא אֲתֵדְבֵר : ὡς πρόβατον ἐπὶ σφαγῆν ἤχθη = Heb. כֶּשֶׂה לְטֶבַח יִזְבֵּל, Isa. liii. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Acts vii. 42, פִּשְׁתָּא : אִינְ אִמְרָא לְנִכְסְתָא אֲתֵדְבֵר : μὲν σφάγια καὶ θυσίας προσηνεγκατέ μοι = Heb. רִבְחָא וְקוֹרְבָנָא רִבְחָא וְקוֹרְבָנָא רִבְחָא : אִינְ אִמְרָא לְנִכְסְתָא אֲתֵדְבֵר : Amos v. 25, where the פִּשְׁתָּא gives קוֹרְבָנָא.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Mark vii. 11: κορβάν ὃ ἐστὶν δῶρον. Dillmann's remark ("Exodus and Leviticus," 318), that in the other Semitic languages the word is borrowed from the Bible, naturally does not hold good for Assyrian. It is very probable that קִרְבָּן is a Babylonian loan-word. Cf. Wellhausen, "Prolegomena," p. 414.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. for this Johannes Latrille in ZA. I. 37.

κτέανον, κτήμα.<sup>1</sup> In Syriac the word קנינא *property* (Gen. xxxiv. 23, קנין) is specially used for "animal for riding;" vide Nestle, in ZDMG. xxxiii. 707. Similarly rukûšu, V R. 9, 36, does not mean "property," as Delitzsch, in the glossary to the third edition of his "Assyrische Lesestücke," s. v. רכש (cf. also *Prolegomena*, p. 4), and Lyon, *Assyr. Manual*, p. 130, would have it; but "animals for riding;" cf. Heb. רכש (Aram. רכשא) and רכוש.<sup>2</sup> The passage in the Arabian Campaign of Sardanapalus,<sup>3</sup>—Gammale rukûšešunu ušalli qû<sup>3</sup> ana šûmešun<sup>4</sup> ištâtû<sup>5</sup> dâme<sup>6</sup> u me paršu,<sup>7,8</sup>—means "they cut open the camels, their riding animals, and for their thirst drank the blood and filthy water" (i. e., the slimy, bitter, fetid fluid in the water-cells of the stomach of the camels, in the stomach-cells).

The result of our investigation, accordingly, is that Hebr. נכסים *wealth*, as well as Assyrian nikasu *offering*, come from the stem nakâsu *to cut off*, while the stem נסך *to offer*, from which Arabic نسيكة *nasike victim*, and Hebrew נסכים, Aram. נסכין *libation*, are derived, seems only to rest on a metathesis from נכס.

<sup>1</sup> Similarly מרשית, fem. pass. Part. of רשׁי (Impf. ירשׁי) "to possess," then also "to grant, to allow," means in Assyrian "herd." Assy. מרשית is feminine to the form مفعول just like Assy. מרחית "wife," which Zimmern, "Busspsalmen," p. 43, n. 2, erroneously considers as an abstract form maf'al. So too Assy. מנר, fem. מנרית "bond-man," cited by Zimmern, represents the form مفعول just as Assy. מנשתית or מלתית "drink," etc., etc.

<sup>2</sup> The development of meanings of רכש is accordingly quite different from that proposed in Gesenius' Lexicon.

<sup>3</sup> This word is important for the passage Bechor. 45a, where it is told of the pupils of Rabbi Ishmael שרפה אחת שנתחייבה שריפה למך, which Levy translates quite correctly "they anatomized a harlot who had been condemned by the government to death by burning." To this Fleischer remarks in his addition to Levy's Chaldee Lexicon, p. 579: "This 'anatomizing' is in such entire opposition to oriental practices, and is so little in accord with the usual meanings of שلق, שلق that for the present I must doubt the correctness of this translation." These doubts are settled by the Assyrian ישלקו. The Impf. Qal of this verb is ישלק and occurs V R. 4, 69: לישנשני אשלק "I cut out their tongues."

<sup>4</sup> Assy. צום "thirst" (V R. 31, 4 šu-u-mu) is = צמא, צמ; cf. SD. 517, 2.

<sup>5</sup> Notice here the use of the form אפתעל of שת' "to drink," on account of the following צימיושן "for their thirst."

<sup>6</sup> Plene da-a-mu Sb. 223.

<sup>7</sup> The correct reading and translation of this difficult word was first given by A. Delattre; see his interesting essay on *L'Asie centrale dans les inscriptions assyriennes*, Bruxelles, 1885, p. 115, n. 2. He remarks there to me-paršu: littéralement "des eaux de paršu." Paršu est l'équivalent de l'hébreu פֶּרֶשׁ "excrément" de la même racine פֶּרֶשׁ. But he wrongly translates "urine"! The Hebrew פֶּרֶשׁ which occurs in six passages of the Old Testament, viz., Exod. xxix. 14; Lev. iv. 11 (וּפְרֶשׁוּ); viii. 17; xvi. 27; Num. xix. 5 (וּפְרֶשׁוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל) Assy. פֶּרֶשׁ "urine" (דְּמִישׁ עֲרִי פֶּרֶשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל); Mal. ii. 3, does not mean "excrementum" like צֶאֱה, but "fimus interior corporis, fimus in ventriculo animalis," "contents of the viscera," "contenu d'un ventricule" just as the corresponding Arabic فَرْث farth. An important parallel passage to this דְּמִישׁ (cf. דְּמִישׁ וּפְרֶשׁוּ) (cf. וּפְרֶשׁוּ רֶם Sanhedrin 67b) is Sennach. v. 83, which I have for the first time correctly explained in my translation of the cuneiform account of the Battle of Halule, *Andover Review*, May, 1886, p. 546, 12.

<sup>8</sup> A complete translation of this highly interesting text has been given by me in the *Études archéologiques, linguistiques et historiques dédiés à Mr. le Dr. Leemans, Leide, E. J. Brill, 1885*, pp. 139-142. Cf. *HEBRAICA*, Vol. II., p. 248.